

Message

From: Butler, Thomas [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=5B47F0FAD97941469ED7A5138CEAD498-TBUTLE02]
Sent: 3/23/2021 7:25:15 PM
To: Ylan Nguyen [nguyen.ylan@epa.gov]; Zhang, Xiao [Zhang.Xiao@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Heads up on Expected Press re: Deep-water Ocean Disposal Sites off the Southern California Coast
Attachments: CBS News Response.docx

Importance: High

From: Lyons, John <Lyons.John@epa.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 19, 2021 8:45 PM
To: Lowery, Brigid <Lowery.Brigid@epa.gov>
Cc: Fitz-James, Schatzi <Fitz-James.Schatzi@epa.gov>; Hovis, Jennifer <Hovis.Jennifer@epa.gov>; Ammon, Doug <Ammon.Doug@epa.gov>; Barton, Dana <Barton.Dana@epa.gov>; Mackey, Cyndy <Mackey.Cyndy@epa.gov>; DeLeon, Rafael <DeLeon.Rafael@epa.gov>; Manzanilla, Enrique <Manzanilla.Enrique@epa.gov>; Herrera, Angeles <Herrera.Angeles@epa.gov>; Chesnutt, John <Chesnutt.John@epa.gov>; Butler, Thomas <Butler.Thomas@epa.gov>
Subject: Heads up on Expected Press re: Deep-water Ocean Disposal Sites off the Southern California Coast
Importance: High

Hi Brigid,

I am writing to give you a heads up on increasing press, public and elected official interest regarding DDT containing waste that was disposed of by Montrose Chemical Co in authorized deep-water ocean disposal sites off the Los Angeles coast in the 1950's and 1960's. We responded yesterday to an inquiry from CBS News (National). That response is attached. We have also received a number of letters from elected officials, including Senator Feinstein. We will be responding to the Senator's letter on Monday.

Background

As you may recall, Region 9 has been addressing releases from the Montrose Chemical Plant property (LA County) since the mid-1980's (NPL listed 1989). Region 9 has completed actions to cleanup DDT contamination in residential properties, as well as portions of the sanitary sewer downstream of the Plant property. Working with Montrose, Region 9 has implemented a groundwater remedial to address a substantial groundwater plume (monochlorobenzene) created by Montrose's historic operations.

In the mid-1990's, EPA expanded this Superfund work to investigate and address a large area immediately off the coast of Los Angeles where sediment is contaminated by DDT originating with Montrose's disposal of liquid waste into the sanitary sewer system. Importantly, as part of that work, Region 9 determined that low income minority communities in Los Angeles and Orange County were consuming contaminated DDT (and PCBs from other sources) contaminated bottom feeding fish. In the late 1990's, we estimated that there were tens of thousands of exposures occurring in those communities due to consumption of contaminated fish. Region 9 has implemented an effective suite of institutional controls – primarily outreach and education using community based organizations – to address this situation. These measure have been very (very) successful in drastically reducing consumption of this and other contaminated fish, even by subsistence fishers.

Ocean Disposal Sites

Palos Verdes effluent-affected DDT and PCB contaminated sediments are located within several miles of the Los Angeles coastline. However, from 1931 until the early 1970's, the USACOE and State established and authorized disposal of

chemical, refinery, radiological and municipal waste at 14 deep-water ocean disposal sites further off the coast of southern California.

Montrose Chemical sent drummed DDT contaminated acid waste to several of these deep-water ocean disposal sites, using a contractor/transporter, in the 1950's and 1960's. The disposal sites that received Montrose waste are located off Catalina Island @ 20+ miles southwest of the Palos Verdes peninsula and Los Angeles Harbor.

Two recent articles in the Los Angeles Times have highlighted this disposal and recent work by scientists using advanced technology to examine a few of the drums as they exist today at @900 meters below the surface of the ocean.

Because of EPA's Superfund work at and around the Montrose Plant property and Palos Verdes Shelf, some have assumed that the deep-water ocean disposal sites are or easily should be part of Region 9's Superfund action. Disposal of waste at the deep-water ocean disposal sites are not and have not ever been part of Region 9's Superfund site work related to releases at and from the Montrose Chemical plant property.

We are in the process of setting up a inter-agency meeting with the State of California and the State/Federal NRD Trustees to discuss the situation as we believe it is timely to discuss the many intertwined issues. Generally, we see next steps as most appropriately being undertaken by the State and possibly CERCLA NRD Trustees.

I am attaching our response to CBS News and links below to the two LA Times articles.

We will stay in touch with OSRTI on this. Let us know whether OSRTI would like an informational briefing or additional information.

Thanks you,
John

John Lyons
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First LA Times article (Oct 25, 2020)

<https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-coast-ddt-dumping-ground/>

Second LA Times article (Mar 10, 2021)

<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2021-03-10/ddt-seafloor-mapping-catalina-noaa-scripps>